



**Town of Arlington**  
**Department of Health and Human Services**  
**Office of the Board of Health**

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## Artificial Turf Study Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: April 2, 2024

Meeting Time: 5PM-7:0PM

Location: Hybrid (In person and remote participation)

### **Arlington Community Center (Formerly, Senior Center)**

Health and Human Services Conference Room  
27 Maple Street, Arlington MA.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Room #201

### **Zoom- Registration link:**

<https://town-arlington-ma-us.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAvcuqoqTssHt1BnuSXOpbXEnysRzAC-LUe>

### **Objectives:**

- 1) To engage with the general public in a discussion about the ATSC draft report.
- 2) To discuss feedback from the general public in response to ATSC draft report.
- 3) To propose edits and supplemental material to be included in the final draft of the ATSC report.

Committee Members present: James DiTullio, Chair; Natasha Waden, Clerk; Mike Gildesgame; Leslie Mayer; Joseph Barr; Jill Krajewski; Marvin Lewiton; David Morgan; Joseph Connelly.

### **Agenda**

#### I. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve meeting minutes from 03/27/2024 was made by Marvin Lewiton with the edits to the following sections:

##### Introduction

Strike the word “proponents” and replace with “opponents”.

##### Heat Impacts on the Environment

3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph: in reference to acknowledging the Parks and Recreation Department, replace the work “Parks” with “Park”.

##### Chemical Impacts on Human and Environmental Health

2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph related to item 4: in the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph after 6-PPD Quinone, strike the words “Committee believes” and replace with “it seems advisable”;

##### Importance of Field Maintenance....

1<sup>st</sup> paragraph related to item 4: strike “elevate” and replace with “alleviate”.

Findings and Recommendations

3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, in reference to default surface: strike “believe” and replace with “belief”.

Footnote

In reference to Point 1: remove the asterisk after field and delete the bullet under the asterisk “The Chair noted....”

2<sup>nd</sup> by Leslie Mayer.

Vote:

Mike Gildesgame, Yes

Leslie Mayer, Yes

Joseph Barr, yes

Jill Krajewski, Yes

Natasha Waden, Yes

Marvin Lewiton, Yes

James DiTullio, Yes

Approved (7-0)

II. Correspondence Received

Natasha Waden reported that the following correspondence were received:

- 1) One email from Susan Chapnick with an attachment to the certified vote pertaining to the 2023 Town Meeting Substitute Motion for Warrant Article #12 and an explanation to the Committee referencing that there is nothing in the Substitute Motion that exempts current projects from the findings of the Artificial Turf Study Committee.
- 2) An email from Greg Dennis with a 4 page attachment outlining proposed edits to the draft report dated 3-22-24.

III. Discussion: Community Input

Natasha Waden, Clerk, reviewed the guidelines for the community input session as outlined on the agenda dated 04/02/2024. Jim DiTullio, Chair, discussed the possibility of allowing speakers additional time to talk as the number of speakers appeared low.

Below is a summary from the following speakers:

Beth Melofchik thanked the Committee for their work and wanted to point out that the Town calendar refers to this Committee as a group, but it is in fact a Committee which has more authority. Additionally, Ms. Melofchik mentioned that the Town, in partnership with the Mystic River Watershed Association, has been awarded a \$1 Million dollar grant to address pollutants and storm water runoff from entering the Charles River. As such, she believes this should be referenced in the report with emphasis on ensuring that efforts from other departments do not neutralize what this grant is trying to accomplish. Ms. Melofchik also

referenced that the Charles River Watershed has recently issued a statement opposing the installation of artificial turf and it is her belief that their reasoning should be reviewed by the Committee, as it would help to enhance the Committee's understanding on the science and context in which this is happening.

A copy of the Charles River Watershed statement had been provided to Committee Members at the beginning of the meeting.

Wynelle Evans thanked the Committee for their work and made the following suggestions: 1) to add language under section "Chemical Impacts on Human Health and the Environment" to include more information which explains that when compared to adults, children will be exposed longer to artificial turf and potential negative impacts, illnesses, and other syndromes that may develop over time; 2) add additional language in reference to PFAS testing to acknowledge that whereas there are thousands of types of PFAS, testing methods may be limited to detect only a small number of them; 3) add language in the report to acknowledge the impacts these chemicals have on employees who exposed while working with artificial turf products such as factory workers, installers/removers, landfill workers, etc.; 4) add language in the Findings and Recommendation section to recognize that while it is important to balance youth access to playing fields, it is just as important to recognize the environmental impacts associated with artificial turf that are and will continue to contribute to the overall effects on the planet, which are not just limited to youth, but to future generations.

Members of the Committee acknowledged the challenges with PFAS testing including the lack of current standards other than for drinking water and the ongoing research in regards to "acceptable levels", specific testing methods, and where products are being tested (prior to shipment or post installation).

Greg Dennis thanked the Committee for their work and made the following suggestions: 1) additional language should be considered in the Health and Safety section discussing the relationship among youth as it relates to outdoor play and screen time; 2) additional language should be added to the Heat Impacts section to include the definition of Wet Bulb testing and clarify what is measured and why; 3) additional discussion should be included in the Chemical Exposure section to acknowledge that there has been no indication of risk associated with people who play on or live near artificial turf surfaces. Mr. Dennis alluded to the fact that most studies suggest additional research is needed, but felt it was important for the reader to understand there has been no health risks detected with crumb rubber; 4) additional language should be considered in the recycling section to include examples of neighboring communities that have been contractually mandating that recycling is part of the procurement process.

The Chair acknowledged and suggested that Mr. Dennis's comments in regards to the wet bulb testing be incorporated into the final Committee report. The Committee agreed to this suggestion. The Chair also recognized Mr. Dennis's comments about recycling and pointed out that the Committee has made a recommendation that a future purchase of artificial turf include contractual language which requires the vendor to take responsibility for the end of life recycling. Another Member discussed the challenges associated with the methodologies of conducting a risk assessment of crumb rubber. As indicated by Mr. Dennis, there is not

enough research to make a conclusion and while there is new technology for testing, it is not there yet and as such the Committee is left with what currently exists. The Member also pointed out that the Committee acknowledges this throughout the report.

Robin Bergman thanked the committee and made the following comments and suggestions:

- 1) Ms. Bergman informed the Committee that recently the Charles River Watershed Association has issued a statement in opposition of the installation of artificial turf, as such, she read the following statement: "The Charles River Water Association (CRWA) opposes the installation of artificial turf as contrary to our core mission of promoting the health of the Charles River and its watershed. Given the increasing prevalence of synthetic turf usage in watershed communities, CRWA wishes to articulate its position on artificial turf and provide resources for those interested in learning more". Ms. Bergman suggested that the Committee review the document and consider incorporating some of their information into the final Committee report;
- 2) Ms. Bergman suggested that the Committee consider incorporating other artificial turf related products such as Poured In Place (PIP) playground surfaces into the report, as these materials also contain PFAS chemicals and are regularly utilized by children;
- 3) Ms. Bergman shared that in the research she has conducted there is no indication that any real recycling is occurring with artificial turf. Ms. Bergman pointed out that the material may be being reused, but the PFAS and other toxic chemicals are still present. Additionally, she referenced materials being stored in fields in Pennsylvania, a factory in Europe that is separating out components for reuse, and a factory in Houston that is burning the products which then pollutes the air and environment in that vicinity.

Susan Stamps thanked the Committee for their work and discussed the following points: 1) as the co-author of the 2023 Town Meeting Substitute Motion for Warrant Article #12, which created the Artificial Study Committee, Ms. Stamps wanted to clarify that the Arlington High School project was not intended to be exempt from the findings of the Artificial Turf Study Committee's report; 2) whereas the High School project was not intended to be exempt from the Committee's report, Ms. Stamps suggested that under the Findings and Recommendations section the word "future" be removed as it applies to "future field planners" and "future field development project".

#### IV. Discussion: Project Timeline, Edits, Deliverables

The Chair opened up the discussion by first addressing the points made by Ms. Stamps specifically related to the final footnote in the report, the statement about future projects and the current Arlington High School project.

Multiple Members shared that their perception upon joining the Committee was that the High School project was not associated with this study. Multiple members agreed that the Committee never discussed the Arlington High School project, but if they had, the Committee likely would have taken a different approach to research which would have included conversations with the High School Building Committee and looking deeper into what alternatives to crumb rubber would be best suited for this specific project.

Another Member expressed concern that the footnote as written and comments in reference to "future projects" negates the work the Committee has done as well as the position it has taken in opposition of crumb rubber infill.

Another Member expressed feeling torn about the reference, as the High School project is both a political and economic issue and whereas this Committee did not discuss the project it does not seem that the Committee can or should move forward with including a recommendation that impacts something that was never discussed.

Another Member referenced that the Arlington Conservation Commission has jurisdiction over the High School project and will be holding a hearing at some point this week to discuss a permit extension, as such; the Conservation Commission will likely make a decision about the infill material.

Another Member suggested that while this Committee technically does not have any authority to require or mandate a specific action, perhaps the report could be forwarded to the High School Building Committee to inform them about the Committee's findings and suggest that perhaps they look into the possibility of an alternative infill.

Members all seemed to agree to the following facts: 1) the Committee was focused on future projects; and 2) there was no focus on any particular field including Arlington Catholic or Arlington High School. The Chair acknowledged that additional work is needed on the footnote. As such, the Committee agreed to allow the Chair and Clerk to edit the language and review it again at the next meeting.

The conversation then focused on reviewing other edits in the report as follows:

- 1) Under Recommendations and Findings, bullet one, strike the word "plastic" as it pertains to "crumb rubber or plastic infills".
- 2) The Committee reviewed a new bullet in regards to "equity" and agreed to include under the findings and recommendations section, the proposed language: "When construction or renovations are considered for town fields, whether natural grass or artificial turf, providing equitable access to high quality playing surfaces should be considered and planning should ensure balancing the needs of different neighborhoods as one of the factors."
- 3) Under Recommendations and Findings: edit the last sentence in the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph to state: "The Committee believes that artificial turf should be an option for future field planners in Arlington, after careful evaluation of the practicality and feasibility of natural turf options".
- 4) The report does not discuss accessibility in terms of providing people with disabilities the ability to participate in the same types of activities as able-bodied people. It was pointed out that grass, among other materials, is not considered as an accessible surface. As such, there was discussion about incorporating this into the report.
- 5) A reference to the Public Land Management Plan should be included in the report. It was also pointed out that recommendations in that plan included organic field maintenance and the potential installation of artificial turf field(s). A brief discussion was had about how the Committee's report will be complementary to the Public Land Management Plan as it lays out a process for what considerations should be taken into account when or if an artificial turf field is constructed.

## V. New Business

The Chair discussed that based on tonight's conversations; additional edits would be made to the document and shared with the Committee and Public on Friday. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday April 9<sup>th</sup> via zoom at 5pm with the anticipation of finalizing last minute edits, voting on the report, and discussing the presentation to Town Meeting.

The Chair also mentioned that the Clerk may be reaching out to individuals to discuss last minute questions or clarify resources. As such, he asked that all Committee Members do their best to respond as soon as possible so that all edits can be made by Friday morning.

VI. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn was made by Mike Gildesgame.

2<sup>nd</sup> by Jill Krajewski.

Vote:

Mike Gildesgame, Yes  
Leslie Mayer, Yes  
Joseph Barr, Not present for vote  
Jill Krajewski, Yes  
Natasha Waden, Yes  
Marvin Lewiton, Yes  
James DiTullio, Yes

Approved (6-0, with one not present for the vote)